REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of original claim 9 and to include the definition of "p" explained in paragraph [0042] of the specification. Claim 9 has been cancelled. Claim 10 has also been amended to include the definition of "p" explained in paragraph [0042] of the specification. Claim 2 has been amended to be in independent form. New claims 25 and 26 have been added to the application. New claim 25 corresponds to claim 23 except that the optical functional sheet is a combined functional sheet as recited in claim 21, i.e., an optical functional sheet as recited in claim 1 and a light diffusive sheet as recited in claim 21. New claim 26 corresponds to claim 24 except that the optical functional sheet is a combined functional sheet as recited in claim 22, i.e., an optical functional sheet as recited in claim 2 and a light diffusive sheet as recited in claim 22.

Reconsideration and removal of the rejections in the Action mailed February 12, 2004, are respectfully requested.

First, the rejection of claims 1, 3, 5, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19 and 23 as being anticipated under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) by Suga (U.S. Patent No. 6,297,908) ("Suga") is moot in view of the amendment to claim 1 to include the limitations of claim 9.

Second, regarding the rejection of claims 2, 4, 6-8, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20 and 24 as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Suga in view of Nakai (U.S. Patent No. 6,219,119) ("Nakai"), the position of the Office as stated on page 4 of the Action is that Nakai teaches the feature of claim 2 (not disclosed in Suga), of the light-diffusing phase forming a continuous phase. Specifically, it is stated in the Action that Nakai teaches the use of "the light diffusing phase (1) arranged in a form of a continuous phase in which the light diffusing phases are mutually coupled in a direction along the sheet surface, and the transparent phase [sic] (2) are arranged in forma [sic] of discontinuous phases in which the transparent phases are decoupled by the light diffusing phases (Fig. 8)." (Action, page 4, lines 2-6).

The statement of the Office is incorrect. First, Nakai discloses two different transparent phases. Nakai does not disclose a light diffusing phase. Second, Fig. 8 of Nakai discloses an arrangement where both of the phases are continuous and not decoupled. I.e., low-refractive-index region 2 and a high-refractive index region comprising light-condensing regions 1 joined by high-refractive-index film 1c.

Applicants also note, regarding claims 7 and 8, that the Office has taken the position (page 4 of the Action) that Suga

teaches the use of air as a transmissive material for use in the light diffusing phases of Suga. This position is incorrect. Suga teaches the use of air only in the transparent phases, i.e., the "light-transmitting regions" (Col. 8, line 12).

Removal of the rejection of claims 2, 4, 6-8, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20 and 24 over Suga in view of Nakai is in order.

Regarding the rejection of claims 9 (the limitations of which are now included in claim 1) and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Suga in view of Kashima (U.S. Patent No. US 2001-0030638) ("Kashima") and the rejection of claims 10 and 22 over Suga in view of Nakai and further in view of Kashima), the Office takes the position in the Action that Kashima teaches a ratio (L/p) of between 2 to 10 in Fig. 7. This statement is incorrect because as described in the specification, paragraph [0042], and as now recited in claims 1 and 10, in the case in which the width of the transparent phase varies along the sheet thickness direction, the surface directional length of the transparent phase "p" is selected as shorter one when comparing the length in the upper most portion and in the lower most portion. In light of this definition, "p" in Fig. 7, i.e., the length of the transparent phase, of Kashima is 0 because the bottoms of the light diffusing phases contact each other. Therefore, "L/p" in Fig. 7 of Kashima is infinity. Stated

differently, the invention of Kashima requires that light must pass through the light-diffusing phase. In such an arrangement, the light is weakened. On the other hand, in the present invention, as shown in Fig. 7, the light passes through the transparent phase and has a strong light collecting effect.

Applicants also note, with respect to claim 23, that the Office identifies Suga as disclosing a light guiding plate (12 in Fig. 8). But, as described in column 4, line 30, of Suga, 12 in Fig. 8 of Suga is a transparent base material film - not a light guiding plate.

A notice of allowability of the claims of the application is believed to be in order and is respectfully solicited.

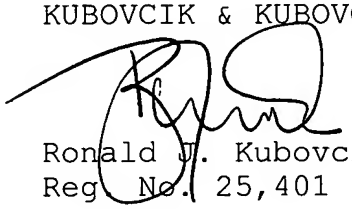
The foregoing is believed to be a complete and proper response to the Office Action dated February 12, 2004, and is believed to place this application in condition for allowance. If, however, minor issues remain that can be resolved by means of a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

In the event that this paper is not considered to be timely filed, applicants hereby petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fee for any such extension may be charged to our Deposit Account No. 111833.

In the event any additional fees are required, please also charge our Deposit Account No. 111833.

Respectfully submitted,

KUBOVCIK & KUBOVCIK



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